

## **The Book of Ruth: Waiting For Our Redeemer – Advent 2025**

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Peace Through Redemption / Ruth 3 / December 14, 2025

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### **Introduction:**

We've been lighting the candles of Advent each week: Hope, Love, and today we lit the candle of Peace. And I'll be honest with you, the world that we have lived in these past few years has been anything but peaceful. Reflecting on just this past year, it's been filled with chaos in one way or another. Even just personally, I've had a week that's been anything but peaceful. But that's often how life is! Pastor Perry told me once that he felt life was often like being in an ocean of trials with little islands of peace scattered around, and maybe that's why peace often feels just out of reach. We want peace in our lives, and instead, we get chaos, uncertainty, and a multitude of things that make us feel unsafe. It leaves that familiar knot in our stomach that shows up right when we're trying to fall asleep. And yet, while we toil on earth, God keeps speaking into our world, "Peace. I have brought peace through my Son, Jesus Christ." Peace that surpasses all understanding. Peace in our spirit, and peace with God. Our souls no longer have to fear eternal judgment because we have peace with our Creator through the death and resurrection of our Savior. And surprisingly, the 3rd chapter in the book of Ruth gives us a clear picture of God's peace. It's an unusual story, but beneath the awkward details and ancient customs is a deep message about the peace God gives to His people. A peace rooted not in circumstances, but in a Redeemer who rescues those in trouble and provides the rest that is so often fleeting in our world. So, let's remind ourselves of what's been happening. The widows Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem from Moab empty: emotionally, spiritually, financially. Ruth, Naomi's Moabite daughter-in-law, stuck by her side with stubborn loyalty and love. And in an act of God's providence, they had food now, thanks to Boaz's kindness, protection, and abundant generosity, but they still had no future, no security, no family line, and no protection. Their ancient culture offered no social safety net; their husbands' deaths removed their economic provider, leaving them with no income, property, or legal standing and making them vulnerable to destitution, exploitation, and dependence on often absent or inadequate family support. And although they found temporary relief in the gleanings from Boaz's fields, peace was not their reality. The wheat and barley harvests had come to an end, and although the text doesn't tell us, chapter 3 occurs about 4 months after chapter 2. Their source of food was going to evaporate if something wasn't done soon. What they needed was a kinsman redeemer to help them, and in the course of one night, God begins to turn their restless uncertainty into a deep, settled peace and hope for the future.

### **Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor**

<sup>1</sup> Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?" <sup>2</sup> Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.

Ruth 3:1-2

The word used for "rest" here that Naomi wants for Ruth is a word that can also be translated as "security". She fears for Ruth because if Naomi died, Ruth would have no possibility of redemption. She feels it is her responsibility to find a better future for Ruth, likely due to the great sacrifice that Ruth made by leaving her homeland and following Naomi to Israel. She then reminds her that Boaz, the man who has helped them through the harvest, is related to them and is at the threshing floor.

<sup>3</sup> Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. <sup>4</sup> But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do.” <sup>5</sup> And she replied, “All that you say I will do.”

Ruth 3:3-5

Naomi's plan is daring, risky, and quite desperate. But why doesn't Naomi simply approach Boaz in the light of day and ask him herself to redeem them? From all accounts, he has been an honorable and generous man for four months; surely, he would be willing to help them. Although we would like to think the best of Naomi, I find it very likely that her plan isn't as innocent as we would like to believe. The desperation of suffering can often tempt people to compromise their morality to make ends meet, so I apologize in advance if some of what I'm about to share with you seems disturbing. A threshing floor in the Bible was an open, flat area used for the separation of grain from the chaff. They would march oxen over the sheaves of grain to loosen their bonds and then toss that up into the air with a winnowing fork so the wind can carry away the outer husks. Jesus makes mention of this in the parable of the wheat and chaff. Throughout Scripture, the threshing floor assumes symbolic significance in the prophetic books as a representation of God's judgment. Although it was used for something good, like food, what sometimes took place there was spiritually dark. At points in Israel's history, these places became areas where sacrifice and worship to pagan gods took place, including acts like cult prostitution. The prophet Hosea speaks of the practice of cult prostitution at threshing floors as he lived in a time when Israel worshipped false gods. Likewise, our story today takes place in the time of the judges, when Israel would oscillate between worshipping Yahweh and worshipping the Canaanite gods around them. They were far from loyal to God during this time. Although we might think that Ruth's preparation and attire are intended to make her beautiful, Naomi's plan is possibly more about seduction, blackmail, or trying to force Boaz to be their redeemer. And so, at Naomi's directive, Ruth takes off her widow's attire, washes herself, puts oil on her face to look healthy, and dons a cloak. Some point to Ezekiel 16 as a parallel, where Israel is pictured as a bride and is said to do the same things, except she is adorned in special, ornate clothing. Personally, though, I am reminded of the account of Judah and Tamar in the book of Genesis, where a desperate daughter-in-law deceives her father-in-law into believing she is a cult prostitute to give her an heir. Additionally, she is told to secretly approach Boaz after he has been satisfied with food and drink in the middle of the night to uncover his feet. The Hebrew word for feet is sometimes translated as legs, meaning Naomi wants her to expose much more than just his ankles. Although Naomi does not instruct Ruth to seduce Boaz per se, the connotation is clearly there. And how does Ruth respond? Unlike Chapter 1, Ruth agrees to do everything her mother-in-law asks her to do.

<sup>6</sup> So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. <sup>7</sup> And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. <sup>8</sup> At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet!

Ruth 3:6-8

Ruth, obeying Naomi, goes stealthily to a slightly intoxicated Boaz while he sleeps so as not to be seen by others, uncovers his feet (or legs), and lies down with him. Imagine Boaz's surprise when, after going to sleep alone is awoken by a cool night breeze to find a woman near him. At this point, he may have been wondering if he had drunk more than he thought and allowed something immoral to happen. In any case,

Naomi's trap was set, and all that needs to happen now is for Ruth to listen to what Boaz wants to do with her. But, like her refusal to leave Naomi in Chapter 1, Ruth deviates from Naomi's plan. Instead of listening to him, Boaz must listen to her request.

<sup>9</sup> He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer."

Ruth 3:9

If you couldn't tell, this is actually Ruth's marriage proposal. She comes to the man not as a woman of the night, but as a woman asking for his love and loyalty. She identifies herself as "your servant," which is actually a different word than what Ruth uses in 2:13. While that word meant more of a worker servant, the word used here is better rendered as handmaiden, and is the same word used for Sarah's maidservant Hagar or Rachel's maidservant Bilhah in Genesis, both of which conceived children on behalf of their masters. Ruth is telling Boaz in more ways than one that she is available, but then asks him to spread his wings over her. We are reminded of Boaz's prayer over Ruth in Chapter 2, when he asked the God of Israel to spread his wings over her. Ruth is asking Boaz to be the answer to his own prayer. In this, we get a beautiful picture of protection, comfort, and warmth from the harshness of the outside world. This phrase can also be translated to "spread the corner of your garment," which is an idiom for establishing a marriage bond. Her reason for this: he is a kinsman-redeemer. But as mentioned last week, the practice of buying land from the widowed as a kinsman-redeemer is separate and different from the practice of levirate marriage, where a close relative helps to produce an heir. Therefore, it's likely that Ruth isn't using the term in the legal way, but more in general terms. Terms that are typically applied in Scripture to God as our redeemer. So why does Ruth ask Boaz to marry her but calls him a redeemer, since the two practices are different? I'm convinced it's because of three reasons. First, we must remember that she is a Moabite and would not have intimate knowledge of Israelite customs and laws. "In sum, this interpretation of Ruth's use of the word "next-of-kin/redeemer" avoids both the category of land redemption and the category of levirate marriage. It thus makes narrative sense of her suggestion of marriage apart from any reference or even indirect allusion either to property or offspring. It further makes narrative sense in that it does not presuppose that Ruth has technical knowledge of Israelite laws or customs." (Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, *Ruth, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*) Second, I believe she asks him to marry her because she truly loves him and wants to see if he will pay her one more kindness as he has done time and again in the months leading up to this moment. In a way, she is asking him for a home, a place of rest apart from the suffering in this world. She is asking him if she can go where he goes, if she can stay where he stays. For his people to truly be her people, and for his God to spread his wings over her and truly be her God. To live alongside him until death do they part. And finally, she does this because she trusts the character of Boaz. She comes to him in humility and without ulterior motive, despite what her mother-in-law had planned, and asks him to redeem her from her sufferings. And she does so with honor, not giving in to temptation when it could have been so easy to. She does all this because she trusts the character of her redeemer as one who is kind, gentle, honest, trustworthy, honorable, generous, and good. And so it is with our Redeemer as well. Any act of human redemption that we can witness in this life must be compared against the standard by which all redemption is measured. Our God, before we truly knew who He was, shows His generosity to us with His common grace, allowing all of humanity to live their lives and enjoy the good things of this world, though we all deserve none of it. He is a good God, pouring out His mercy on us at every turn like an abundance

of grain in Ruth's cloak. But He does even more than that. God's abundant generosity and goodness show themselves most clearly when He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to live amongst us, yet perfectly and without sin, and to die a death that we rightly deserved as a sacrifice for our sins. He holds out this perfect act of redemption for all who come to Him and ask to be covered by the wings of His forgiveness. Maybe you come here today lowly and tired, worn down by the utter lack of peace in your life. Or maybe this is your first time or hundredth time hearing the gospel message, but you haven't yet trusted in the character of God. Just like Ruth, you and I find peace at the feet of our Redeemer; not by fixing our own lives, not by proving ourselves, not by being strong enough or spiritual enough or put-together enough. Ruth says, "I am yours. Cover me." And the gospel says the same thing: Peace comes when we stop trying to be our own savior and throw ourselves at the feet of the One who actually can redeem us. Just as Jesus tells us in the gospel of Matthew 11, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Come find peace in Jesus. Ruth's trust in her redeemer proves true. Here is Boaz's response:

<sup>10</sup> And he said, "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. <sup>11</sup> And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. <sup>12</sup> And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. <sup>13</sup> Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the Lord lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning."

Ruth 3:10-13

Again, it's apparent here that Ruth does in fact love Boaz as he has taken notice and appreciates that she hasn't gone after other, younger suitors even though she very well could have. Her heart is for him, and he honors her love by reassuring her that he will do all that she asks. At this moment, I imagine a wave of relief and peace washing over Ruth as she hears the gentle words she has been longing for: "Do not fear. Yes, I will make sure that you are cared for. No longer will you have to live in uncertainty and poverty. I will make sure you have a home for the rest of your life." Just as Ruth acted with honor towards Boaz, he likewise acts with honor towards her. No seduction takes place, and he directs her to lie back down. But there are no cutting corners. Honor and righteousness dictate that things must be done in the right way. And so Boaz mentions the existence of someone else who could lay claim as a kinsman-redeemer, but again reassures her that everything will get sorted out on her behalf. Whether it be through another or through himself, Boaz will ensure her future and deliver the rest she is seeking.

<sup>14</sup> So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." <sup>15</sup> And he said, "Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out." So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her.

Ruth 3:14-15a

Boaz, acting as if he has already taken her under his wings, protects Ruth's honor from being wrongfully brought to shame, directing her to leave when no one else can identify her and accuse her of sexual immorality. Additionally, he literally pours out an abundance of generosity on her by giving her six measures of grain, or about 60-90 lbs. Far above the ephah of barely he gave to her in chapter 2. It is just like how our Redeemer pours out an abundance of grace and mercy on us through Jesus. Yet I digress...

Then she went into the city. <sup>16</sup> And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “How did you fare, my daughter?” Then she told her all that the man had done for her, <sup>17</sup> saying, “These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me, ‘You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’” <sup>18</sup> She replied, “Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today.”

Ruth 3:15b-18

At this point, rest for Naomi and Ruth is assured, whether it be through Boaz or someone else. The man, Boaz, won't stop until he is satisfied with the result. And if you listen carefully, you can almost hear the echo of a better Redeemer. One who refused to rest until our salvation was settled, finished, and completed on a cross outside Jerusalem. Boaz secured Naomi and Ruth's future. Jesus Christ secures ours. Her love for him has been made known, the hope of redemption is soon coming to pass, peace has just washed over her entire situation, and joy can be seen on the horizon. But that is a sermon for next week's Advent focus. As the worship team comes back up to the stage, let me close with this. Ruth 3 is a beautiful, real-life illustration of the gospel: We are like Ruth: poor, helpless, with no hope of securing our own future. Jesus is like Boaz: our Redeemer who welcomes us, covers us, protects us, and gives us His name and inheritance. At the cross, Jesus did exactly what Boaz did; He says, “Do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask.” Except Jesus didn't just risk His life; He gave His life to redeem us from sin. And now, because of Jesus, peace is not just possible; It's promised. So how do we step into that peace today?

1. Come to the Redeemer. Bring your fears, your anxieties, your sin, your weariness. Lay them at His feet. He's not annoyed. He's not disappointed. He's your Redeemer. Lay down your troubles confidently. Why confidently?
2. Rest in His Character. Peace doesn't come from knowing how everything will work out. It comes from knowing who holds your life in His hands. In those hands, there is no fear of judgment. Only hope.
3. Wait with Hope. Ruth went home before the story was finished. Some of you are still waiting for your rest and peace, too. But if anything, be reminded that the stories of Advent and Easter tell us that God always finishes what He starts.

That's what Advent is all about. Jesus Christ, our greater Boaz, has come. He spreads His wings over His people. He redeems the broken, restores the empty, and brings peace to restless hearts. So today we light the candle of peace and proclaim: Peace has come. Peace is here. Peace has a name: Jesus.